

County of Kern
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION-MINUTES

Regular Meeting
Monday January 28, 2013

Commissioners Present: Marisa Banks (mb), Carmen Bernal (cb), Marcus Mitchell (mm), Andre Taylor (at), Tomeka Powell (tp), Linda Carrick (lc), Jewelle Scales (js)

Commissioners Absent: none

Others Present: EEO Officer Michael Goulart (mg), Greg Collins, Ginny Krebs, Ed Herrera

Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m.

1. FLAG SALUTE

2. PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS: None

3. Per Ed Herrera: I received a call from Daniel Gomez' mother who said that her he was being harassed because in the span of one month he had six or seven citations from the Highway Patrol. She was concerned that there was some harassment taking place. She said that he went to file a citizen's complaint and it was rejected which is against the law. I advised her to get in contact with the State Attorney General to file the complaint.

As many of you know, when a citizen wants to make a complaint it has to be accepted, it has to be logged and the state has to be made aware of the complaint. If someone tries to dissuade you from making the complaint it is a Penal Code violation.

I have always advocated that we get the side of law enforcement as well so we have a better picture of what is going on from both sides.

4. Presentation from Ed Herrera: I met with the City of Taft Chief of Police Ed Whiting regarding safety in the schools one day before the recent shooting occurred at Taft High School. Mr. Whiting was asked, "How safe are our schools?" Mr. Whiting said that I am the Chief of Police and I am a Second Amendment proponent. He said that Taft schools are safe and when asked why he said that "We have an armed officer on campus."

The Bryan Oliver shooting happened the next day. Bryan Oliver when on campus when a shotgun and shot a student in what is alleged to be a response to being bullied. He had a two shell shotgun and we thank God that it wasn't an AK-47 with a thirty round clip on it because more students could have been killed or injured.

It was through the courage of the teacher by talking to the student while he was reloading the gun and convincing him to put it down that there were not any further injuries.

There have been many suggestions about what to do regarding the gun debate; expand background checks, ban assault weapons, beef up law enforcement, bolster school safety and improve mental health services.

I received calls from the Justice Department. They know that I am in Taft and they want to have a meeting with Interim Superintendent of Schools, Bill McDermott. Usually the local people don't want the U.S. Government coming in and telling them what to do but this is not the enforcement branch of the Justice Department. They just want to come in without a lot of publicity and try to help the situation. McDermott said that they were doing counseling with the students and staff. I suggested that what they needed was a hotline and that struck a chord with him as being an excellent idea.

If a hotline existed students could call if they were aware or heard of anything potentially happening but they wouldn't feel like they were telling or "ratting" on fellow students.

I got a call from my sister in Los Angeles about my grand niece. She is a good student and gets good grades but she was being bullied in school. Her mom said that she didn't want to go to school anymore so my nephew went to talk to the school. They suggested that they transfer her out. My nephew said that he would not transfer her out and that if anyone was to transfer it should be the one doing the bullying.

Marquez Equilibria called and stated that the DOJ have resources available. I reassured Bill McDermott that these contacts from the DOJ are interested in assisting in any way that they can.

The Human Relations Commission has had success in the past in dealing with issues in the area such as the recent issues with the Maricopa Police Department. The HRC was able to conduct a meeting in Maricopa and it helped lead to the eventual changes that occurred there.

The City of Taft is trying to deal with issues and being creative in working with all members of the community. There was a previous issue with undocumented field workers that wanted to "come out of the shadows" to show their support and gratitude for the community. The City created a program that allowed them to do clean-up projects in the City. West Side Waste Management has even donated money to the cause.

(js) Did the school give any indicator about the lag time between the school shooting and the community meetings that were held after the event?

Ed Herrera: it was actually a short time. It was scheduled within approximately a week.

(mm) We have been talking about bullying and looking at a way to incorporate the issue into what we are doing. As we move forward I hope we can call on you. It is clear that bullying is continuing to have consequences in our community and we

need to take a stance as a commission.

Ed Herrera: I would like to continue to work with the commission. I spent about six years on the Police Commission in Los Angeles and we did a lot of outreach in the South Central community. We learned that the community was pleased to see our presence there. We conducted numerous meetings and during the meetings different segments of the community broke themselves up by ethnic group and discussed their concerns. When the groups got back together we found out that all of the groups had independently expressed the same concerns. All parents have the same concerns for the safety of their children.

(js) Joel Moreno of Kern County Mental Health went to speak with people in Taft today to look at establishing a hotline.

(tp) I also noticed that the principal in Taft said that they will be working with educators from Tehachapi in developing a program that implements what they have already learned there. I think that needs to be a standard for the High School District in order to be proactive.

(cb) Have there been any assessments as to the conditions of safety within the schools right now?

Ed Herrera: The Educational Code is well defined and specific related to issues of discipline.

(cb) I have found that there is not even a writing standard for students in kindergarten. If you can't even talk about educational standards how can you begin to talk about safety in the schools? I feel very passionate that during my time here we need create an awareness and really get involved with these issues.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 20, 2012 Monthly Meeting

Motion to approve minutes (at), 2nd: (cb), four ayes, Carrick, Powell, and Scales abstained

6. NEW BUSINESS:

a) Election of Human Relations Commission Chair.

Jewelle Scales nominates Marcus Mitchell for Chair. Marcus Mitchell accepts the nomination.

There are no other nominations.

Balloting is conducted. Marcus Mitchell is elected Chair by a vote of 7-0.

b) Discussion of revised meeting date.

(mg) Last year the Kern County Grand Jury conducted a review of the Human Relations Commission. There were two findings in the report that need to be addressed. The first was a lack of meetings and the second was the need for timely appointments to the Commission by the Board of Supervisors.

For a long period of time the HRC met on the second Tuesday of the month. This date seemed to work well and we did not have as many issues related to failing to reach a quorum for the meeting. Since we moved the meeting date to the third Monday of the month we have experienced scheduling problems due to County holidays in January and February. We also experience scheduling problems in November and December due to the meeting date coinciding with other holidays and vacation times.

I asked if the Commission would like to consider a new meeting date and suggested reverting to the second Tuesday of the month.

(js) We were talking about technology. Often times we have multiple meetings that we are attending. Do we have a way to possibly use technology in order to allow a commissioner to attend a meeting while they are at a different location?

(mg) We have done tele-conferencing in the past to allow a commissioner from Ridgecrest to participate in the meeting from home. A related issue is the number of Commissioners that are currently appointed. When we have a large number of vacancies it is more difficult to achieve a quorum if only a couple of commissioners are absent. We can talk to General Services to determine what type of technology is available.

(mm) I support moving the meeting date to the second Tuesday of the month.

(at) I support the need for discussion with members of the Board to ensure that appointments are made timely to the Commission.

(mm) We need to enlist the participation of our colleagues that may be interested in joining the HRC and reach out to them to discuss the Commission and possible membership.

Motion by Commissioner Bernal to move the regular meeting date to the second Tuesday of the month.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Taylor.

All Ayes.

7 . OLD BUSINESS

- a) Discussion of Annual Essay Contest.
 - (cb) Can we narrow it down to a specific date to have the Essay Contest Banquet?
 - (tp) I will assist you with planning.
 - (mb) I would like to assist as well.
 - (at) I would also like to assist in planning for the contest.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a) Community & Media Outreach – No report
- b) Education/Essay Contest – No report
- c) Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action – No report
- d) Grants/Funding – No report
- e) Housing – Commissioner Carrick, Chair – (lc) Fair Housing volunteer training will take place on Thursday, February 7 and Thursday, March 14.
- f) Judicial & Legislative Review – (js) the Proposition 8 issue will be coming back. There will be some discussion about grass roots efforts to look at the issue in relation to an upcoming court ruling.
- g) Law Enforcement - No report
- h) Special Issues – No report
- i) Access and Functional Needs – No report
- j) Annual Report Ad-hoc Committee – Mitchell, Chair, Taylor – No report
- k) Training/Mentor program Ad-Hoc Committee – Bernal, Mitchell – No report

9. STAFF REPORT:

(mg) Introduced Ginny Krebs as the new Personnel Director.

A handout, "The Brown Act: open meetings for local legislative bodies" was disseminated to Commissioners.

10. COMMISSION MEMBER PRESENTATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- (mm) Disseminated to the Commission, a draft of a letter to Donald Carter regarding expulsion rates in Kern County.

I spoke with former Supervisor Karen Goh. She had received an update from the Kern High School District that showed that with the new reporting of information that is coming out the expulsion numbers looks very different and it indicates that expulsions have been reduced across the County.

I still think that we should look at the data when the report comes out.

- (mg) I would like to recommend that when the report comes out we invite the KHSD to come back to us and share the information. I would also recommend that we contact those interested members of the community that were here during the first meeting with KHSD representatives. This would give us an opportunity to close that loop of communication that began last year.

- (mm) I would like to create an ad-hoc subcommittee that will put together a plan of what the Commission would like to do for the year. I believe that the next election cycle will present us with a lot of opportunities for doing some work here in Kern County.

- (js) The State of the County address will be at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 30, 2013, at the Marriott.

The NAACP State of the Black Community will take place on February 9, 2013 at the Beale Library.

- (tp) I just wanted to say that I am glad to be back and also wanted to acknowledge that Greg Collins is here this evening and it is good to see that he has joined us.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to Adjourn: tp, 2nd: cb, All Ayes, meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.